

RESOLUTION NO. 5 OF 2016

A resolution of the County of Centre, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, urging the General Assembly and Governor Tom Wolf to restore funding for human services programs to historic levels, and to put mechanisms in place to assure any future budget impasse or budget delay does not become a burden on Centre County and its constituents.

WHEREAS, counties are at the forefront for delivery of crucial human services that protect the most vulnerable individuals, such as child welfare and protective, mental health, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse treatment, homeless assistance, meal programs, lottery funded transportation, and others; and

WHEREAS, the capacity to meet critical service needs has been compromised by a steady decrease in state funding over the past decade, especially the drastic ten percent aggregate cut to the seven human services line items in FY 2012-2013; and

WHEREAS, the Human Services Block Grant has provided much-needed flexibility for the 30 counties eligible to participate, but remains closed to the remaining 37 remaining counties; and

WHEREAS, new mandates and additional program requirements continue to be placed on counties in the face of decreasing state funds; and

WHEREAS, while the rebalancing initiative for child welfare services is portrayed as only an accounting change, the initiative shifts a full quarter of funds for mandated child protective services into the following budget year with no more than a promise of being made whole; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the six-month budget impasse in FY 2015-2016, counties and the providers with whom they contract were forced to make difficult decisions about remaining open and meeting clients' needs while state payments were withheld; and

WHEREAS, many counties tapped reserves, borrowed funds, reduced or suspended payments to vendors or subcontractors, limited staff travel, laid off or reduced hours of employees, among other strategies, to maintain their focus on service delivery and assure that clients felt no harm; and

WHEREAS, in order to continue providing services during the budget impasse, Centre County was forced to:

- Deplete \$6.5M Unassigned General Fund Balance
- Deplete \$2.4M IT Fund Balance
- Deplete \$1.6M Capital Fund
- Freeze purchasing to only essentials
- All open positions are justified before hiring
- Limit staff travel
- Use Prison Commissary Funds to purchase food and clothing for inmates as well as maintenance at the Correctional Facility
- Delay Capital Projects of \$1.3M; and

WHEREAS, Centre County has estimated lost revenue of approximately \$22,000 due to loss of interest during the impasse; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Centre County remains committed to the important role we play in delivery of services to our communities; and

RESOLVED, that Centre County stands ready to work in partnership with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania in support of counties' top priority for 2016, the commonwealth budget and human services funding; and

RESOLVED, that Centre County supports restoration of funding of the ten percent reductions to the seven key human services line items that occurred in FY 2012-2013, as without restoration to prior funding levels, all counties find it difficult to serve the state's most needy citizens; and

RESOLVED, that Centre County opposes "rebalancing" initiatives for child welfare services that will force counties to reduce funding by a quarter, reduce payments to providers, shorten contract periods, or use county property tax funds to cover the state's obligation until a future budget makes a true allocation; and

RESOLVED, that Centre County asks that state leaders continue to work with them to find ways to administer human services programs in a way that ensures both quality and efficiency, including expansion of the Human Services Block Grant to any willing and able county; and

RESOLVED, that Centre County will work in concert with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania and state leaders to develop comprehensive solutions for any future budget impasse or delay to ensure that counties are never again put in a situation where they are forced to cover the state's funding obligations; and

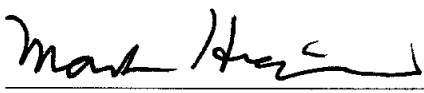
RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Centre County legislative delegation, to Governor Wolf, and to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.


ADOPTED by the Board of Commissioners of the County of Centre, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this first day of March 2016.

ATTEST: 
Denise L. Elbell,
Acting Administrator/Financial Management

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:


Michael Pipe, Chair


Mark Higgins


Steven G. Dershem